# Martin Luther (founder of the reform), speaks on Mary

> There can be no doubt that the Virgin Mary is in heaven. How it happened we do not know. And since the Holy Spirit has told us nothing about it, we can make of it no article of faith . . . It is enough to know that she lives in Christ.
> *(Sermon of August 15, 1522, the last time Martin Luther preached on the Feast of the Assumption)*
>
> The veneration of Mary is inscribed in the very depths of the human heart.
> *(Sermon, September 1, 1522)*
>
> [She is the] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ . . . She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.
> *(Sermon, Christmas, 1531)*
>
> No woman is like you. You are more than Eve or Sarah, blessed above all nobility, wisdom, and sanctity.
> *(Sermon, Feast of the Visitation, 1537)*
>
> One should honor Mary as she herself wished and as she expressed it in the Magnificat. She praised God for his deeds. How then can we praise her? The true honor of Mary is the honor of God, the praise of God's grace . . . Mary is nothing for the sake of herself, but for the sake of Christ . . . Mary does not wish that we come to her, but through her to God.
> *(Explanation of the Magnificat, 1521)*

Luther gives the Blessed Virgin the exalted position of "Spiritual Mother" for Christians:

> It is the consolation and the superabundant goodness of God, that man is

> able to exult in such a treasure. Mary is his true Mother ..
> *(Sermon, Christmas, 1522)*

> Mary is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of all of us even though it was Christ alone who reposed on her knees . . . If he is ours, we ought to be in his situation; there where he is, we ought also to be and all that he has ought to be ours, and his mother is also our mother.
> *(Sermon, Christmas, 1529)*

> It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God's gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin"
> *(Sermon: "On the Day of the Conception of the Mother of God," 1527)*

> She is full of grace, proclaimed to be entirely without sin- something exceedingly great. For God's grace fills her with everything good and makes her devoid of all evil.
> *(Personal {"Little"} Prayer Book*, 1522)

## Martin Luther on Mary's Perpetual Virginity

> Christ, our Savior, was the real and natural fruit of Mary's virginal womb . . . This was without the cooperation of a man, and she remained a virgin after that.

{*Luther's Works*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan (vols. 1-30) & Helmut T. Lehmann (vols. 31-55), St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House (vols. 1-30); Philadelphia: Fortress Press (vols. 31-55), 1955, v.22:23 / *Sermons on John*, chaps. 1-4 (1539)}

> Christ . . . was the only Son of Mary, and the Virgin Mary bore no children besides Him . . . I am inclined to agree with those who declare that 'brothers' really mean 'cousins' here, for Holy Writ and the Jews always call cousins brothers.

{Pelikan, *ibid.,* v.22:214-15 / *Sermons on John*, chaps. 1-4 (1539)}

> A new lie about me is being circulated. I am supposed to have preached

> and written that Mary, the mother of God, was not a virgin either before or after the birth of Christ . . .

{Pelikan, *ibid.,*v.45:199 / *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523)}

> Scripture does not say or indicate that she later lost her virginity . . .
>
> When Matthew [1:25] says that Joseph did not know Mary carnally until she had brought forth her son, it does not follow that he knew her subsequently; on the contrary, it means that he never did know her . . . This babble . . . is without justification . . . he has neither noticed nor paid any attention to either Scripture or the common idiom.

{Pelikan, *ibid.,* v.45:206,212-3 / *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew* (1523) }

> ". . . she is full of grace, proclaimed to be entirely without sin. . . . God's grace fills her with everything good and makes her devoid of all evil. . . . God is with her, meaning that all she did or left undone is divine and the action of God in her. Moreover, God guarded and protected her from all that might be hurtful to her."

(Luther's Works, American edition, vol. 43, p. 40, ed. H. Lehmann, Fortress, 1968)

> ". . . she is rightly called not only the mother of the man, but also the Mother of God. . . . it is certain that Mary is the Mother of the real and true God."

{Sermon on John 14. 16: Luther's Works (St. Louis, ed. Jaroslav, Pelican, Concordia. vol. 24. p. 107)}

> "Christ our Savior was the real and natural fruit of Mary's virginal womb. . . . This was without the cooperation of a man, and she remained a virgin after that."

(On the Gospel of St. John: Luther's Works, vol. 22. p. 23, ed. Jaroslav Pelican, Concordia, 1957)

> "Men have crowded all her glory into a single phrase: The Mother of God. No one can say anything greater of her, though he had as many tongues as there are leaves on the trees."

(From the Commentary on the Magnificat)

## Commentaries on Luther

> Editor Jaroslav Pelikan (Lutheran) adds:
>
> "Luther . . . does not even consider the possibility that Mary might have had other children than Jesus. This is consistent with his lifelong acceptance of the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary."
> {Pelikan, *ibid.*,v.22:214-5}
>
> ". . . in the resolutions of the 95 theses Luther rejects every blasphemy against the Virgin, and thinks that one should ask for pardon for any evil said or thought against her."
> ( Ref: Wm. J. Cole, "Was Luther a Devotee of Mary?" in Marian Studies 1970, p. 116:)
>
> "In Luther's Explanation of the Magnificat in 1521, he begins and ends with an invocation to Mary, which Wright feels compelled to call 'surprising'".
> (David F. Wright, Chosen by God: Mary in Evangelical Perspecive, London: Marshall Pickering, 1989, p. 178, Cited from Faith & Reason, Spring 1994, p. 6.)

## Other Reformers on Mary's Perpetual Virginity

## John Calvin

> Helvidius displayed excessive ignorance in concluding that Mary must have had many sons, because Christ's 'brothers' are sometimes mentioned.

{*Harmony of Matthew, Mark & Luke*, sec. 39 (Geneva, 1562), vol. 2 / From *Calvin's Commentaries*, tr. William Pringle, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949, p.215; on Matthew 13:55}

> [On Matt 1:25:] The inference he [Helvidius] drew from it was, that Mary

> remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband . . . No just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words . . . as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called 'first-born'; but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin . . . What took place afterwards the historian does not inform us . . . No man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation.

{Pringle, *ibid*., vol. I, p. 107}

> Under the word 'brethren' the Hebrews include all cousins and other relations, whatever may be the degree of affinity.

{Pringle, *ibid*., vol. I, p. 283 / *Commentary on John*, (7:3) }

## Huldreich Zwingli

> He turns, in September 1522, to a lyrical defense of the perpetual virginity of the mother of Christ . . . To deny that Mary remained 'inviolata' before, during and after the birth of her Son, was to doubt the omnipotence of God . . . and it was right and profitable to repeat the angelic greeting - not prayer - 'Hail Mary' . . . God esteemed Mary above all creatures, including the saints and angels - it was her purity, innocence and invincible faith that mankind must follow. Prayer, however, must be . . . to God alone . . .
>
> 'Fidei expositio,' the last pamphlet from his pen . . . There is a special insistence upon the perpetual virginity of Mary.

{G. R. Potter, *Zwingli*, London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976, pp.88-9,395 / *The Perpetual Virginity of Mary* . . ., Sep. 17, 1522}

> Zwingli had printed in 1524 a sermon on 'Mary, ever virgin, mother of God.'

{Thurian, *ibid*., p.76}

> I have never thought, still less taught, or declared publicly, anything

> concerning the subject of the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our salvation, which could be considered dishonourable, impious, unworthy or evil . . . I believe with all my heart according to the word of holy gospel that this pure virgin bore for us the Son of God and that she remained, in the birth and after it, a pure and unsullied virgin, for eternity.

{Thurian, *ibid*., p.76 / same sermon}

## Heinrich Bullinger

> Bullinger (d. 1575) . . . defends Mary's perpetual virginity . . . and inveighs against the false Christians who defraud her of her rightful praise: 'In Mary everything is extraordinary and all the more glorious as it has sprung from pure faith and burning love of God.' She is 'the most unique and the noblest member' of the Christian community . . .
>
> 'The Virgin Mary . . . completely sanctified by the grace and blood of her only Son and abundantly endowed by the gift of the Holy Spirit and preferred to all . . . now lives happily with Christ in heaven and is called and remains ever-Virgin and Mother of God.'

{In Hilda Graef, *Mary: A history of Doctrine and Devotion*, combined ed. of vols. 1 & 2, London: Sheed & Ward, 1965, vol.2, pp.14-5}

## John Wesley (Founder of Methodism)

> The Blessed Virgin Mary, who, as well after as when she brought him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin.

{"Letter to a Roman Catholic" / In *This Rock*, Nov. 1990, p.25}

*Some of the above from Nelson Pacheco from "Luther On Our Lady".*
*Most of the Martin Luther quotes were found on Dave Armstrong's site*
*www.BiblicalCatholic.org*

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